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A Special Historical Study

USAFSS PERFORMANCE
DURING THE CUBAN CRISIS

Volume II

GROUND BASED OPERATIONS

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OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1962

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SECURITY SERVICE

HQ USAFSS

TSC NO 63-1558

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A Special Historical Study

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Volume II

GROUND BASED OPERATIONS

38C HISTORICAL DIVISION

This material contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws (Title 18, U.S.C., Sections 793, 794, and 798) the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SECURITY SERVICE

HQ USAFSS

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FOREWORD

As indicated in the first volume of this study, which covered USAFSS operations during the Cuban crisis, the provision of assistance is not only essential but imperative if we are to successfully counter the Communist onslaught of the Free World, whether that onslaught be in the form of cold war maneuvers or military insurgencies. It appears that the

Communist build-up in Cuba had a dual purpose -- i.e., political (cold war) as well as military. It is a matter of conjecture what

could have happened if the U.S. had not taken the action. Although a missile-launched nuclear attack against the U.S. seems inconsistent with Communist ideologies, military support of Communist-inspired and Communist-led insurgencies

in Latin American countries is not. The massive array of military might in Cuba would be extremely impressive to would-be insurgents in other Latin American nations. However, all of these possibilities, an attack on the Continental U.S., an attack on Latin America, military support of in-

surge in Latin America, the safety of U.S. personnel at Guantanamo, a major cold war break-through, U.S. and Free World prestige, etc., had to be considered. There were sources of

on Communist activities in Cuba. The relative

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value or importance of each in the handling of the Cuban crisis

is not the concern of this study. However, the role that USAFSS played in meeting its responsibility in the

Effort is.

Although history will record that the crisis in Cuba erupted

in October 1962, USAFSS became directly involved in the crisis

as early as April 1962. The command's initial effort was in the

form of ground-based USAFSS KNU in Florida, with special emphasis on

the problems encountered and the lessons learned. However,

As pointed out in the first volume, a detailed and comprehensive his-

in Volume I of this study, the provided by the USAFSS

was of vital interest and value. However, with the initial-

tion of the naval blockade and stepped-up military activity on

the part of U.S. forces, the need for data mushroomed.

Of particular significance was

lessons learned, these too must be considered in light of related

USAFSS, as the Air

Force Cryptologic Agency, was responsible for producing

of its service counterpart. Therefore, the bulk of the

effort in the Cuban crisis rested with this command.

For example, the type of service needed was

appears irrevocable. It seems,

By the

every nature of the USAFSS counterpart

mission, USAFSS

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units and personnel throughout the world were familiar with and experienced in this type of activity. Neither of the other service cryptologic agencies (NSG and ASA) had this type of continuing responsibility. So, even though the Navy had a permanent facility in the area, the requirement to deploy a USAFSS ground-based

was recognized in the early stages of the developing crisis.

This volume covers the deployment and operation of the

ground-based USAFSS ERU in Florida, with special emphasis on the problems encountered and the lessons learned. However,

here, as in the first volume, a detailed and comprehensive historical analysis of USAFSS participation in the Cuban crisis is

impractical, if not impossible. Nonetheless, solutions to some of the problems will be quite obvious simply from the factual data

included in this study. Solutions to other problems will require a great deal of study -- both practical and academic. In regard to

lessons learned, these too must be considered in light of related information and future developments. However, three factors

seem evident: (1) The Communists were not "defeated" in Cuba;

(2) the "Communist cancer" is deeply embedded in Cuba and the

potential of its spread into other Latin American countries is ob-

vious; and (3) the need for continuous

appears irrevocable. It seems,

mission, USAFSS

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therefore, that one major conclusion can be drawn even at this early date; i.e., that the service cryptologic agencies -- especially USAFSS -- is faced with an urgent requirement to develop and maintain a permanent capability.

Some other significant factors revealed by the deployment of the ERU included (1) the fundamentals of emergency reaction planning for support were basically sound; (2) the USAFSS capability to meet the emergency proved to be adequate; (3) the coordination, cooperation, and support among the various services and agencies were excellent and had a significant bearing on the success of the operation; and (4) it is possible that the respect and prestige of the command advanced considerably as a result of its role during the Cuban crisis.

The Historical Division sincerely acknowledges the cooperation and support provided by personnel in DCS/Operations, DCS/Personnel, and the AFSCC toward the successful completion of this historical study.

This volume is subject to change, revision and correction. Therefore, comments, suggestions, and criticisms should be

addressed to the Historical Division (COI-3), Office of Information, Hq USAFSS.

Agencies
 Support for Planning
 Communications Overloaded at Cudjoe Key
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USAFSS

Operations During The Cuban Crisis

Introduction

(TS) Apparently, the moves of Soviet Russia in setting up strategic missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft in Cuba began primarily as a military operation. In the passing months, however, it developed into a geopolitical move of vast proportions. It forced the President of the United States to make drastic moves which, with just a few mistakes on either side, could have resulted in nuclear war. It did not generate into this; but the results will undoubtedly be felt, from an historical standpoint, for some time to come.

(TS) Although the operation, from the Pentagon's standpoint, was a Navy-directed effort, the Air Force, represented by USAFSS, was the principal agency responsible for the operation in both in terms of assignment and accomplishment. In the first volume of this study, the operations showed that most of the operational burden fell on USAFSS. As the development of the effort progressed, a similar picture developed in the Air Force and Navy operations. (TS) For many weeks previous to the declaration of an emergency by President Kennedy, and the ensuing Naval blockade

to protect the standpoint of protection

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established on 23 October,

al-

though the amount of intelligence being brought from Cuba by the many persons returning to the United States must have been of major proportion and significance. Consequently, much of the groundwork had been laid for the larger operation that was to follow. When the blockade started, and the possibilities of really swung into high gear, the possibilities of Along with this growth became a conglomeration of tasks and responsibilities that threatened to swamp the processing operations which continued as an emergency reaction or contingency operation.

Consequently, it was not equipped from either a personnel or materiel standpoint to conduct the mission without a constant and intense pressure on those involved. There was a basic difficulty here. Three command agencies were demanding service from the single processing unit--each of which was a major job in itself. (First were the defense officials who, understandably, were critically interested from the standpoint of protection of the United States

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from a possible overt attack from the CRAF. Second was the contribution of

Third were the basic

operations of

that to ensure the

It was a common

and one which required properly the highest degree of professional

(TS) The first two of these mission segments required immediate recognition of the account of the activities of USAF to activities of the

This is

where the difficulties became vivid, as two things were vitally necessary -- (1) highly qualified and (2)

adequate communications. The first was filled by emergency actions in converting who simply had a background of

since the command had never had a large requirement for The problem had been overcome in the effort, and was similarly solved in the

and program. These grew more and more competent as time passed. Communications became really critical in November, however, when the bulk of material that had to be reported absolutely saturated the available secure circuits.

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(TS) : The bulk of this reporting responsibility, called reporting and theoretically defined as

fell on the USAFSS

units because of their greater familiarity with this reporting. It was a common mission all over the world,

and one which required probably the highest degree of professional-

ism of any operation. The pages following are an account of the activities of USAFSS personnel as they dealt with these critical responsibilities.

where the difficulties became vivid, as two things were vitally

(S) and building up a highly efficient

adequate communications. The first was filled by emergency

actions in connecting who simply had a background of

since the command had never had a large replacement

The problem had been overcome in the

effort, and was similarly solved in the

program. These grew more and more

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critical in November, however, when the bulk of material that

had to be reported absolutely saturated the available secure

circuits.

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Emergency Reaction Unit Puts Greatest Personnel Strain on USAFSS

(TS) By 1 December the portion of the command's

effort in the Cuban crisis had leveled off into a relatively efficient operation and was progressing on a comparatively routine basis. This was not true, however, with the Emergency Reaction Unit (ERU) from the Air Force Special Communications Center (AFSCC) which, by that time, had reached a strength of about 250 personnel at Cudjoe Key, Florida. The airborne operation had several feathers in its cap, including equipment and station there. This would have been a comparatively credit for the lion's share of The ERU also had been praised by the Navy for its work in but this was far from a settled picture.

Operation Starts In Late October

(TS) This proved to be merely the first of many changes in this operation. Fortunately, Col. Charles W. Shoup, at the AFSS Office of Production (AFSSOP) and the AFSS Office of Production (AFSSOP) had been keeping in touch with the command on developments at AFSCC had set aside personnel and mobile equipment a month before Mr. Kennedy's declaration for the contingency operation. He told Colonel Maca that the changes as they took place. On 16 September, the command received. Sorry I cannot get more definite tasking but people here reluctant to push button before high level decision made. This decision is now forecast for tonight (21 October) When this is made we ship or separate forces one tasking

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the AFSCC to prepare to deploy the Continental U.S. ERU according to its own operations plan.

(TS) So, during the next month, as the political situation was growing increasingly tense, the unit -- with an van -- stood by at Kelly AFB awaiting developments. The first came on 20 October, two days before the President made his historic TV announcement, when said the AFSCC should be ready to ship personnel to the Naval Station at Key West, Florida, to man positions at the USN

station there. This would have been a comparatively simple task, but the next day it was changed to deployment of the entire unit. This was to include positions, to be manned until the permanent positions were installed at the Navy

(TS) This proved to be merely the first of many changes in this operation. Fortunately, Col. Charles W. Shepard, at the AFSS Office of Production (AFSSOP) had been keeping in touch with the command on developments at AFSCC. Thus, the command had at least some time to anticipate the changes as they took place. He told Colonel Macia that:

... Sorry I cannot get more definite tasking but people here reluctant to push button before high level decision is made. This decision is now forecast for tonight (21 October) ... When this is made we skip or accelerate Phases one

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and two and go into phase three (of USAFSS plan). . . .
This accounts for agency's interest in what is contained in
our plan

All Know Something Is Coming; But What?

(TS) Crisis hung over the nation's capitol for several
days prior to the President's announcement. Everyone connect-
ed with running the government was acting with critical haste.

News observers, though they were not "in the know," knew some-
thing was coming. The New York Times reported that "

too many trips had been cancelled, too many announcements
made for what seemed good rather than real reasons." All over

Washington, officials failed to meet appointments, or having

met them, departed in haste with little explanation. On the

morning of Sunday, 21 October, President Kennedy received con-

firmation by diplomats that his views on the blockade concept of

retaliation had been accepted by allied powers. Dean Acheson

and U.S. Ambassador to Germany Walter Dowling left for Bri-

tain and Continental Europe to brief government officials on the

coming action.

DEFCON III Declared; Command Moves With Haste

(TS) The expected high level declaration did not come

until the evening of 22 October, when President Kennedy made

his nation-wide TV address. Earlier in the day, however, the

der of USAFSS, outlined his concept of operations to AFSCC

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Joint Chiefs of Staff declared Defense Condition III, which placed all of Security Service on six-hour alert.* The C-130A was al-

ready on its way to Europe to bolster the effort, and De-

tachment 1 of the 6945th RSM at MacDill AFB, Fla., was told

it would have to support the USAFSS Key West opera-
tion. Twenty-seven operational personnel and the

van departed Kelly AFB on 22 October. They were in place at

Key West the following day to start operations. Nine more air-
men were held at the AFSCC for future deployment. Also,

for the two extra positions to be manned at the

Key West Naval Station, the AFSCC was holding 15 operators on
alert for deployment as soon as those positions were activated. 6

(TS) Some difficulties faced the ERU as the personnel

and van arrived. There was no tractor available to haul the

van from the C-124 to the operating site. There were no

antennas or appropriate power generator facilities,

and there was little information available on (a)

responsibilities, and (b) the organizational relation-

ships of the ERU. However, these difficulties did not signifi-

cantly affect setting up the unit.

Covername BIRETTA Assigned;

(TS) Back at Kelly, Maj. Gen. Richard P. Klocko, Comman-

der of USAFSS, outlined his concept of operations to AFSCC

* This condition lasted until before Christmas.

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Commander Col. C. B. Munson. The AFSCC was to maintain complete operational control of the unit; separated fully from Detachment 1, 6945th RSM, MacDill AFB. Colonel Munson told Maj. Russell Harriger, temporary unit commander, that in addition to the aforementioned two extra positions, three possibly would be added later.

He further explained that although this concept might change later. He said that "... the AFSCC

is now undertaking negotiations to obtain a second/third echelon responsibility for that material which you

"8" This capability was in being at the end of Novem-

ber, but final authority for its use had not been received at that time.

Move, Operations, Established With Difficulty. (TS)

The move was made and operations were started by 23 October,

but this was not done without difficulty. In the first place, the

command was in dire straits as far as available contingency

equipment was concerned. That is, its resources were pretty

nearly depleted following a similar - but considerably larger - contingency operation directed toward the problem in Vietnam.

This operation had been in progress for nearly a year, and was

just settling into a permanent operation. * It was more coincidence

This deployment had started in December 1961 in support of tactical forces of the 2d Advanced Squadron (ADVON) Tan Son Nhut, South Vietnam. It operated as a contingency unit until the Spring of 1963.

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than anything else that the equipment for deployment to Florida was available within the command. There were other difficulties also:¹⁰

1. The command had to compete with other organizations

for C-124's to airlift the equipment; though this did not actually hinder the deployment.

2. It had to select an officer-in-charge familiar with

and requirements. He also had to be capable of welding an Air Force organization within a Navy unit.

3. After arriving in Florida, the command found it had to provide personnel to maintain its equipment at the Navy station.

It had not been informed that the Navy could not handle this detail.

4. The Navy could not provide transportation, though the initial specifications called for full support.*

Operational Concepts Differ. (TS) , By the time the

unit was settled, the Naval station at Key West had already said

it would have the permanent positions installed by 25 October,¹¹

* Col. Macia later emphasized the point that cooperation with

was excellent, but the apparent inability of to get adequate support from Navy elements at Key West helped

reach the conclusion that we should establish a separate

(effort.) (Macia-Klocko Memo) tactical forces of the (South Vietnam). It operated as a contingency unit until the Spring

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and the phase-in was in fact completed by the 28th.¹² USAFSS

operations called for 56 men for all categories, and the Navy

said that this would be absolutely all that could be accommodated.

The facility was crowded.¹³ Within less than a week,

the remaining USAFSS personnel were in Florida, and operations

were integrated into a three-section watch arrangement.

The USAFSS mission was

with all of the being handled by a combined Air

Force-Navy crew. But deficiencies at the Navy site were

many: Communications were inadequate; there was no mess;

some equipment was still stored in boxes; maps were inadequate

quate

intercommunications between and areas

were not available; and the Navy personnel were not trained to

react rapidly in

For

a time, even after the ERU arrived, the Navy station closed

Key West would not fill the bill. There simply was not enough down operations after "normal" duty hours.

Calls For Close Tactical Support, Close Coordination

Meanwhile, laid out its requirements for the

first two phases of operations. This called

for the Key West plant to be the and cen-

ter for as well as its own On

*

Air Defense.

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24 October,

said: 17

. . . It appears desirable to outline responsibilities for the operations at our station in Key West. I wish to hold one officer responsible for the overall operational control of the facilities at that site. This operational control is delegated by me to the OIC through Director, Naval Security Group. I wish (the) commander USAFSS to assist this station in its mission through assignment of and processing personnel to . This augments resources and provides for an important input of USAFSS skills and techniques into our effort. Further, I wish the Air Force augmentation unit . . . to be utilized to the maximum in satisfying requirements we receive from Air Force commands such as TAC. The OIC should so utilize this unit in exercising operational control within Command and administration of Air Force and Naval personnel is not affected by the above. This should remain in regular service channels. Director Naval Security Group and Commander, USAFSS, should work out logistical support arrangements between them with the Director, Naval Security Group furnishing as much support of this nature as possible. In event Commander USAFSS must utilize resources in direct support missions, maximum warning should be given me and the Director Naval Security Group in order we may hold disruption of vital functions to minimum.

Military Buildup Intense; Air Activity Grows. (TS) Ob-

viously, under even normal circumstances, the facilities at Key West would not fill the bill. There simply was not enough room or equipment to handle the potential

calls for close tactical support, close coordination

by the vast buildup in operations. Squadrons of F-100's and F-106's from the Tactical Air Command zoomed into Florida's Patrick and MacDill AFB's. In the Caribbean there were 10,000 Marines about to go on maneuvers. Secretary of Defense

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Robert McNamara ordered 24 troop carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve (14,000 men) to active duty. SAC and TAC were already flying reconnaissance missions out of Homestead AFB, near Miami.¹⁸ operations over Cuba be-

came intense,¹⁹ and on 24 October, Major Rudolph Anderson, flying a U-2 high above Cuba, was shot down to become the first (and only) aerial casualty of the crisis. The need for accurate, current, military intelligence became paramount and some changes had to be made.

Air Force Concept Unique Among Agencies.

(TS) USAFSS personnel the world over were well acquainted with activities in connection with

operations, as well as the accompanying need

for as as possible in this respect.

Neither of the other service cryptologic agencies* had this continuing responsibility. To develop this capability, analysts required considerable experience and ability to immediately detect and analyze the requirements of COMNAV and COMUSMACV. We would have to double our present

Unfortunately, there was not sufficient room at the Key West site to develop this analytical capability.

The need was known almost from the beginning, and had located an alternate site early in the operational period. This

* The Army Security Agency (ASA) and Naval Security Group (NAVSECGRU).

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was at a former down-range station of the Eglin Gulf Missile Test Range (EGMTR) at Cudjoe Key, not far from Key West.²⁰

So, on 30 October, told USAF that it had an ". . . urgent requirement to utilize this site. . . ."21

USAF Approves Quickly; USAFSS Prime Changed.

(TS Within an hour, USAF gave its approval and following a briefing in Washington by Colonel Macia of USAFSS, outlined the command's future operations. The

said it was important that CONAD and CINCAFLANT be kept current on the general more important that

be accomplished as first priority. Said

Our problem is that limitations in physical facilities at (Key West) enables us to do only very limited there. The capability presently on board enables us to meet in a barely adequate fashion the requirement for In order to perform the necessary to meet the requirements of CONAD and AFLANT, we would have to double our present effort at (Key West).

(TS The problem was still critical, however, as it would certainly be some time before the ERU could move to Cudjoe Key. The requirements remained the same, so they would have to be satisfied in some way with the facilities at hand. So,

* The Army Security Agency (ASA) and Navy Security Agency (NSA) (UNCLASSIFIED)

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added that:²³

... We can . . . provide a very limited response to these requirements by adding a small number of Air Force Security Service personnel familiar with these requirements to the complement at . . . operating under control of OIC, . . . permitting these individuals to pick off as a by-product of our limited . . . in support of the . . . that information which would also satisfy CONAD and CINCAFLANT. When the . . . is not engaged in supporting . . . we will direct the OIC, . . . to satisfy the requirements of CONAD and AFLANT to the extent possible. . . . It is our understanding that the information produced as a result of (these) arrangements would be passed over a communications circuit from Key West to MacDill AFB where it would be relayed to the other Air Force consumers. Pertinent information would also be passed by appropriate secure means to CONAD Control Center (CCC) at Key West.

Cudjoe Key Remains a "Must." (TS This called for

even more overcrowding in an already overcrowded location,

however, and could be considered only as a stopgap measure.

The . . . realized this, so the solution was deployment to Cudjoe Key. At that site, . . . felt that the facility should be capable of

But apparent-

ly . . . had its eyes set on expansion of the new location even before the move was started. For example, it said:²⁴

... Based on our preliminary information it would appear that in addition to the personnel required to perform the mission outlined there may be space to

If so I might propose a co-located Army-Air Force facility at Cudjoe Key.

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~~TOP SECRET~~Crypto Agencies Lay Out Proposed Cudjoe Key Facilities

(TS) At 1 p.m. on 1 November, USAFSS met with

the other SCA's to plan for the ultimate facility at

Cudjoe Key. During the meeting, ASA expressed little or no

interest in collocating with USAFSS at the site; particularly

in view of the proposed configuration which would take all of

the room available if the station was eventually so equipped.

The plans were quite ambitious and included 25 blaw
would be used by appropriate
secure means to COMAD Control Center (CCC) at Key West.

Cudjoe Key remains a "Must." (TS) This called for

over more overcrowding in an already overcrowded location.

However, and could be considered only as a stopgap measure.

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... Based on our preliminary information it would appear
that in addition to the personnel required to perform the
mission outlined there may be space toIf so I might
propose a co-located Army-Air Force facility at Cudjoe
Key.~~TOP SECRET~~

But before this could be done, the command had to make arrangements with the Vitro Corporation, which was under contract with the Atlantic Missile Range to care for the installation, to remove its equipment so the installation could begin.²⁶

Directs Opening of Cudjoe Key Station

The next day the command told the command

to proceed with preparations to establish the

unit at Cudjoe Key. It had to be capable of complete field pro-

cessing and -

The directive

tasked the ERU with immediate

Command Points To 7 November Cover of Operations

The significance of this activity was brought out at MacDill AFB during the height of activity, when an air traffic control problem was actually proclaimed by CONAD and Navy officials. More important, however, was the

He liked what he saw. On 8 November

he reported:

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discussed later in this study.

Cudjoe Key Shows Improvement Over Key West

(S)

over the next week.

Direct Opening of Cudjoe Key Station

The tests continued over the first week in

November as the USAFSS team did its best to meet require-

ments within the limited facilities at Key West.

Command Points To 7 November Cutover Of Operations.

(S) The command set 7 November as the date to cut over operations from Key West to Cudjoe Key. But for a number of reasons this did not take place on schedule. In the meantime, however, the OIC was getting a good look at them.

He liked what he saw. On 9 November he reported.²⁹

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...the transfer might cause a shift in service that
...to be altered up to this point, particularly in regard to
...communications. The first voiced objection was in connection
...with voice communications between the sites for

On 7 November, USAFSS's Lt. Col. Craydon K. En-
park, Capt. Bernard Ardians, and Capt. Alan E. James met
with the Navy's Captain Hingman and Hingman and Lt. Cmdr.
Macara to discuss the scheduled takeover. Colonel Enpark

assured the Navy representatives that the USAFSS unit was
ready to cut away from the inter-service installation and give

2. The capability was considerably
greater than at ... principally because of the extra
room available. There also was the fact that the USAFSS
personnel would not be interspersed with other ... and
would have complete control of their operations. ...
of an ... Captain Hingman directed the Navy

3. The capability was excellent; with an edge
in favor of the Cudjoe Key site. The OIC said "... transi-
tion should not pose any problems. When full complement
admiral's funds and obtain the highest possible priority. This

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USAFSS personnel arrive . . . capability will be best anywhere."

Navy Concerned About Quality of Service. (SECRET) In the meantime, however, the Navy crypto officials were concerned that the transfer might cause a decline in service that had been offered up to this point, particularly in regard to communications. The first voiced objection was in connection with voice communications between the sites for

On 7 November, USAFSS's Lt. Col. Craydon K. Eubank, Capt. Bernard Ardisna, and Capt. Alan E. James met with the Navy's Captains Hingsman and Hinsant and Lt. Cmdr. Macara to discuss the scheduled cutover. Colonel Eubank

assured the Navy representatives that the USAFSS unit was ready to cut away from the inter-service installation and give

Admiral McElroy, Commander of Key West Forces, at least as good service as he had been getting up to that point.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Navy appeared to be

completely satisfied with the arrangement for continued use of an unsecure line. Captain Hingsman directed the Navy

communications officer to order a direct unsecure hot line

from Cudjoe Key to the admiral's center. He was to use the

admiral's funds and obtain the highest possible priority. This

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line was in addition to one already installed; however it would not go through the Naval switchboard. The direct unsecure line was installed and

as it had been done previously between Key West and the admiral's center. Secure voice equipment was to be installed when it became available.

(SECRET) Later, Navy officials said that Admiral McElroy didn't agree that the should be

sent from Cudjoe Key. The point under consideration appeared to be the relative distance between the two stations and the operations center -- seven miles from Key West and 17 miles from Cudjoe Key. His reasoning was not readily apparent on this matter as the information already had been

passed over unsecure lines and distance had never been men-

tioned as a factor. In the interim, arrangements were made

to install a KW-26 teletype circuit between Cudjoe Key and the

admiral's operation center. Finally, four lines were installed

between Cudjoe Key and the operation center to replace the one

unsecure line that previously existed between the naval

station and the operations center. These lines consisted

of two unsecure telephones, one KW-26, and one KY-8 circuit. 30

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(TS)

In the meantime, however, the commander of the NAVSECGRU station at Key West had urged to proceed with caution with the move, although USAFSS still felt there was no need for concern. Consequently, as the two services were meeting in Florida, the command received a message saying: 31

... Transfer of tasks from must not result in any deterioration of service to our customers. must continue at the present level as minimum. Therefore, request you insure no required AFSS personnel be moved from until establishment of reliable secure communications to COMKEYWESTFOR. Further, complete assumption by including movement of needed AFSS personnel, cannot be made until we are sure that Specific approval by this headquarters should be obtained prior to cut-over. . . .

Tandem Operation Established At Two Stations. (S)

Both the command and the ERU wanted to get started at the new site. They were convinced that the service would improve rather than deteriorate as so many people seemed to fear. So, to satisfy all interested agencies, three flights were moved to Cudjoe Key on 8 November, and one flight remained at Key West to continue the there. The was du-

plicated entirely for nearly a week, with Cudjoe Key operating

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The unit commander said "

tandem operations will continue until advised

assume full responsibility for

Establishing duplicate operations was a calculated risk, the

command knew. If the delayed too long in

giving the order to cut over completely, manning would be-

come a problem. During the split operations, the ERU supplied

operators and analysts to Key West while manning its own site.

So, if the split was prolonged, a manning problem was immi-
nent.

Convinced Early; But Navy Delays Shift. (TS)

didn't take the new site long to convince that it could go

it alone. On the morning of 9 November, the tandem opera-

tions swung into full production, and before the day ended,

night of 13 November

... This headquarters sufficiently assured reliable secure
communications established and

is comparable to Permission granted
assume mission currently held

including movement of needed AFSS personnel . . .

Admiral McElroy, however, was not yet ready to relieve

the USAFSS personnel from Key West -- and did not do so for

nearly a week. There was never any official expression of

just why this happened. However, Major Harriger agreed

that he would . . . see him at his (Admiral McElroy's) earliest

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that he ". . . would not move remaining troops until matter fully coordinated (with) all concerned . . ." He was confident that as soon as the KW-26 circuit between Cudjoe Key and Admiral McElroy's operations center was installed (which was the Navy's only remaining objection to complete separation), the approval would be forthcoming. He said ". . . our use of (the circuit) tomorrow (12 November) will be basis for his decision. Knowing full well we will give him service far beyond his wildest dream, he will approve release of our troops at or before his 5 p.m. staff briefing tomorrow evening. His confidence was not particularly well-founded, however, because it was several more days before the move actually became fact -- and this not until pressure had been exerted on the unit commander

On the night of 13 November told Major Harriger to:

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". . . go see Admiral McElroy and assure him that the moving of Air Force personnel from will in no way hinder or reduce his support on the problem. Report back the results of your conversation with Admiral McElroy. Pay strict attention to any suggestions or recommendations he may make."

(S) The unit commander couldn't see the Key West

Forces commander immediately, however, and could not say

just when he could do so. The next day he told the command

that he would ". . . see him at his (Admiral McElroy's) earliest

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convenience", but could guarantee nothing.³⁶ Major

Harriger insisted, however, that this in no way implied diffi-

culties with the Navy officials, but was simply the fact as it

stood. Said the unit commander:³⁷

. . . .Talked with top Navy (officials) and have feel-
ing everyone quite relieved end (of split operations) in
sight. Invited to admiral's daily operational briefing and
had light chat with him plus staff. He is entirely sold on
and the support we gave him from
Our troops at Navy station working straight days, securing
each evening after last
This is not common knowledge but well known by
and cleared staff of COMKEYWESTFOR and being done by
them. Feel problem generated by fact that COMKEYWEST-
FOR not fully briefed and personnel responsible afraid to
admit error once decision had been made. . . .

Product Improves At Cudjoe Key; But Confusion Grows

(S. By the time the fourth flight moved to Cudjoe Key,
the product and service on the Cuban tactical air, air defense,
and civil air problems had improved. At first, however,
operations were at a feverish pace and almost immediately a
controversy developed. It concerned the use of the telecon-

ference circuit that had been installed between Cudjoe Key and
This circuit had been installed for the
(evom) between the two points. But in just a couple
of days its use had branched off to include nearly all subjects
of discussion. The situation came to a head on 13 November,
when representatives of the Joint Air Reconnaissance Control

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Center, (JRCC), Boca Chica, Fla., and the CONAD Control Center (CCC) were at the site observing operations. Key

West was in communication via KW-26, and during this time

opened a telecon with the representative at Cudjoe

Key. Major Harriger reported the next day that: ³⁸

In the middle of flap where CCC/JRCC representatives were on site observing and COMKEYWESTFOR at the other end of KW-26 on Navy station, telecon reporting to taking place, or calling for a telecon. In an honest or otherwise attempt to satisfy the requirements of his boss, (the representative at Cudjoe Key) is forced to disrupt some local operations to gain this information and this creates confusion.

(S) Unfortunately, this came at a time when the Air

Force Chief of Intelligence (AFCIN) was critical of minor

errors in the product, and the urgency of the mission

itself caused considerable confusion in the operations area.

With these things in evidence, the detachment commander was

forced to exercise his authority to bring a measure of order

to the operation. He told the command: ³⁹

The only terms of reference we had on these (representatives) was (that) they would provide assistance. I requested they immediately (move) from area until we found for them more gainful employment. This was done immediately and they are now working on wrap-ups. In an already confused environment, we can ill afford conflicts of interest. While I am on the Navy station negotiating with the admiral for the release of Gunter's trick (those personnel remaining at a junior grade civilian with no service affiliation has

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been tasked via person to person telecon to pass his views on the situation This violates all concepts of channels and USAFSS/Navy and end up going in different directions.

(S) Major Harriger's objection was that itself had established the telecon circuit and established the priority for its use. This called for the circuit to be used only for

. Unfortuna-
tely, it had been used extensively for other purposes and the unit commander said ". . . much information in these per-

son to person telecons (between and is unrelated to

. Ques-
tions and answers involve policy, tasking, requirements,

personnel matters, politics, and will have an impact on USAFSS

command planning and must therefore be handled through command channels." Consequently, he directed that all telecons

would be station to station rather than person to person; with

the representative sitting in if necessary. His stand was

that ". . . a military situation can be run no other way." 40

Personnel Again Rises As Critical Problem; Communications Also

(S) As the operation grew, a shortage of proficient

-- along with personnel of other specialties -- was sure

to follow. After just a few days of operations this became

more and more important to the unit commander.

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was still heavy and he knew that if he was to continue to supply timely

he needed experienced personnel. The problem was the need for analysts who could instantly so that

could be accomplished. This capability he did not have to the extent necessary, and on 16 November, he told the command:

... We have a total requirement for

assigned only are qualified to do this. The remaining 18 are airmen who took

To augment our present six/five qualified men to the desired nine/sixteen we need

We will provide 14 men on a one-for-one even exchange. Realize this situation is Utopian; however, we cannot use

In this respect, though, the command was in trouble.

~~Personnel Again Rises As Critical Problem: Communications Also~~
The Cuban crisis had exerted a tremendous pressure on USAFSS

personnel resources. The full scale contingency and organizational

operation in Southeast Asia earlier in the year was

part of the cause. The main point was that world-wide

more and more important to the unit commander operations had to be supported as usual; and

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were not trained overnight. The command was in dire straits personnel-wise. The operations up to this point, along with the preceding requirements, had taken a tremendous toll. Also, by the end of November, the temporary duty periods of many of those at Cudjoe Key were running out. The problem of replacements became paramount at that time. The same

thing was happening to those with families in San Antonio (HQ USAFSS) and San Angelo (6940th SW) that had happened to the European Security Region crews who left families in Germany. Married personnel living off the economy in Marathon, Fla., some 25 miles from the site, were having financial difficulties. It created a situation of supporting two homes, and by the end of November, Major Harriger said that not only was his capability suffering, but a simi-

lar situation would exist in the long. (S) But the command could do only its best, and this, according to the unit commander, was not quite enough to maintain the unit's standard. By 28 November, he had re-

ceived lower ranking airmen to replace experienced noncommen- most experienced in the operations and in USAFSS background, in them they were assigned as supervisors and he was the most pressing. It followed that NCO's, particularly in the higher grades, had a higher percentage of married men than those and these of course had the least exper-

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his objections to this move.* Said Major

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. . . It is difficult enough to unify and control upwards of 250 airmen on TDY status in a civilian environment without cranking in problems. Until such time as ERU 1 obtains PCS status, greater care should be exercised in the selection of personnel. Project officers responsible for the selection of the original men are to be commended. Replacements must be of (the) same calibre or the effort will slip.

(S) The unit commander was concerned enough to return a replacement NCO flight commander to Goodfellow AFB because of specific experience limitations and a cardiac condition in his medical history. These replacements, he felt, just had to be top-notch people; despite the fact that international tensions were beginning to diminish somewhat. Physical and psychological points were just as important as professional points in Major's mind; so he told the command.⁴⁵

I cannot place the individuals' health or USAFSS prestige in such jeopardy. (Assigned NCO flight commanders) work under far greater pressure than any commissioned officer in the USAFSS. I know of no sergeants charged with greater responsibility. Although Cuban tension from political aspect has slackened off,

But the command could do only its best, and this. Around the clock, three flight commanders personally make important decisions and operate hotlines and KW-26 on-line telecons

maintain the unit's standard. By 28 November, it had to

* The real binding consideration here -- from the standpoints of both the unit and the command -- was the fact that those most experienced in the operations and in USAFSS background, were also those whose financial difficulties were the most pressing. It followed that NCO's, particularly in the higher grades, had a higher percentage of married men than those in lower grades -- and these of course had the least experience.

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with Admiral and Colonel They answer messages of the highest significance and are responsible in no small part for the

They accomplish this during hours of darkness with closest USAFSS officer 27 miles away; we live in constant shadow of hundreds of USAF and U.S. Navy planes over and around Cuba daily. If one is lost,

I don't care to discuss the consequence and loss of prestige to the command. . . .

Expectations Continue To Increase Among Consumers, Other Agencies

(S) Requirements placed on continued to increase during the first few weeks of operation. When the station initially opened, it appeared deluged with requirements -- from nearly all directions. Although had set up its prime requirement as the appeared to have many other needs for the products of the unit.* On 13 November, the following queries were made:

The possibility of providing this service was affected by a number of considerations and Major "left that" This problem will be compounded by (the fact that CONAL Control Center is neither configured nor organized to utilize

"4"

He felt that the real contribution by (S) In connection with this multi-source tasking and requirements, particularly from Col. told Gen. that ". . . it was evident that there were too many offices empowered to issue instructions. Requirements affecting the mission of the ERU have been from the

. . . ". (Macia-Klocko Memo).

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continued to in-

no break, continued on

(S)

increase during the first few weeks of operation. When the sta-

-- station initially opened, it appeared delayed with requirements

CONAD Wants Direct

Although all directions from nearly all directions. Although all directions from nearly all directions. (S) Shortly afterward, Colonel senior controller

appeared in CONAD's Control Center, asked General for direct

to have many other needs for the products of the unit. On 13 support in the form of

November, the following queries were made:

The possibility of providing this service was affected by a num-
ber of considerations and Major felt that "... solv-
ing this problem will be compounded by (the) fact that CONAD
Control Center is neither configured nor organized to utilize

"47

(S) He felt that the real contribution of
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that "... it was evident that there were too many
offices empowered to issue instructions. Requirements
affecting the mission of the ERU have been from the

... (Macia-Klocko Memo).

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Communications Overloaded At Cudjoe Key

(S) By 18 November, the pressure applied on the small station was pushing the facilities to the

limit. This was particularly true of communications which were handling a routine 18,000 character groups a day, plus a high volume of emergency precedence

The basic difficulty was the need to transmit all manned by operations personnel, with communications men

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and the bulk of this traffic eliminated the advantage of electrical reporting. It was saturating the communications and at times it was necessary to clear out the station backlog by courier. Obviously, something had to be done, so Major Harriger prepared a two-part solution to the problem. He advocated:⁴⁹

1. Establishing operations communications circuits between the

Communications Overloaded At Omaha Key

(S). He explained that since the operations communications circuits would be exclusively

This was particularly true of communications which were handling a routine 18,000 character groups a day, plus a high

If more was needed by or the AFSCC, the

circuit would always be available. Also, the circuits could be manned by operations personnel, with communications men

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being needed only for maintenance. 50

Proposal Has Built-in Saving of Personnel; An Urgent

Need. (S The foregoing discussions on the difficulties encountered at the new station -- all within a week of its opening -- showed clearly that much more was expected of it than was originally intended. Certainly it was going to have to change from an emergency installation to a more established facility. It was toward this end that the unit commander had submitted the above recommendations. There were several inherent advantages to the proposed changes, which he outlined as follows:

1. Relieve the existing communications load.

2. Allow more favorable working conditions for communications personnel (personnel saving would allow four-trick operation in place of the three-trick schedule in effect at the time).

3. Provide immediate and AFSCC.

4. Provide real time technical details on significant activity with capability for discussion and exchange of views.

5. Continued into the second month of the crisis.

November, General received a rather surprising proposal.

6. Provide the current level of analysis for back-up to

Group. This came in the form of an identified pertinent naval

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7. Immediate ⁵² based on information provided or AFSCC.

8. The experience level of the detachment would be raised as a result of constant contact with experienced and AFSCC.

(TS Major Harriger said he could put these recommendations into effect as soon as he got approval -- and as soon as the operations communications circuits were put into effect. ⁵²

A week later, said the detachment could discontinue electrical transmission of

The also dropped its requirement for

With this advance made, the command felt that if it would drop its requirement for

personnel (personnel saving would allow four-trick operators)

The ERU's problem of the three-trick schedule in effect at the time.)

⁵³ Provide immediate. Further ease would be eased even further.

NAVSECGRU Proposes Immediate Availability Of Its

(S) Problems and difficulties notwithstanding, operations

tions continued into the second month of the crisis, and on 28

November, General received a rather surprising proposal

from Admiral ¹ Commander of the Naval Security

Group. This came in the form of an offer of all pertinent naval

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to be sent to Cudjoe Key immediately. The Navy commander said ". . . it would be highly advantageous to have

all NAVSECGRU available to

on as rapid a basis as possible. . . .". Admiral had already discussed this with the ERU, and the USAFSS

station felt that it would be a big break, as the inclu- ded unique

This would help the USAFSS analysts

to evaluate In some

cases, it would be the only source of information for

by your stations.

Ad-

miral Kurtz said the USAFSS station could name its own require- ments.

Reason Not Clear, But Move Appreciated. (S) The

reason for the proposal was not clear at all, as it appeared to

be a reversal of the previous NAVSECGRU concept of operations.

The command operations officials pondered the situation, say-

ing.

This factor makes us wonder why NSG is making the proposal. In the early days of the current situation, NSG wanted everything to go to COMKEYWESTFOR through Navy channels. CINCLANT even went so far as to request that our ERU . . . positions be placed under opera- tional control of NSG. (although) turned it down.

As a possible answer to the question, however, they felt

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that there may have been some Navy dealings about which they knew nothing, and said:

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. . . We understand that Admiral FOR,

COMKEYWEST-

that he was getting

improved service after the transfer from Key West to Cudjoe Key. Admiral message may be in line with Admiral's desire to get maximum support from ERU Number 1.

(S) However, regardless of the overall intent or pur-

pose of the Navy's action, the arrangement would improve the

mission capability of the ERU, so General

told Admi-

ral he agreed ". . . that has requirement for

by your stations.

Your proposal appears most satisfactory, particularly as it does

not involve additional equipment and personnel." He authorized

the unit commander at Cudjoe Key to deal directly with the Navy

in working out the details, which were mostly in connection with

communications. Admiral initially recommended that

traffic be routed from the USS Oxford, through Guantanamo

Naval Station and Key West Naval Station to Cudjoe Key.

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Operations Slow, But The Future Holds Much

As the weeks passed, the Cuban operations began

By mid-December, the SAC U-2 flights were the only

remaining flights in the "hot" category. The

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political situation was tapering off as the Soviets continued to

ship their IL-28's back home marking the end of reportable

offensive weapons on the Caribbean island. As the USAFSS

unit at Cudjoe Key continued its

however, its future remained

in doubt. There was still no word -- even to the end of Decem-

ber 1962 -- as to whether or not it would be established as a

permanent operating base. Flying commands still working in

Florida, however, seemed unable to become really set in an

operational vein. On 12 December, Major said:

... Basic problem is getting them (CONAD) to agree among themselves just what their requirement is and what they want. Among other things, they are thinking in terms of a 29-man senior full colonel in charge. This appears excessive to support one

There is an unusual amount of in-house conflict (or) confusion (or both) within CONAD on this matter. Although USAFSS gives me the authority to deal directly with local CONAD people, they are obviously not at full liberty to reciprocate since strings are pulled from Colorado Springs. . . . There is excessive jockeying for position within CONAD (and) operations and between CONAD and Navy. All this over one fighter squadron. . . . Perhaps forthcoming meeting at (Washington) will enable CONAD to present their planned concept of operation and outline just what support it is they want and who we should give it to. . . .

USAFSS Must Look To Future Cuban Operations

(S) All reports, from operating commands to the

indicated that the USAFSS ERU at Key

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West and Cudjoe Key had acquitted itself well. But it was, nonetheless, an emergency unit, whereas the picture emerging from the Cuban crisis showed that this effort almost had to be a permanent operation (at least there had to be one somewhere).

The Soviet Union was not going to roll over and play dead; its

foot was in the door in the Western Hemisphere, and all indica-

tions were that the initial setback would not change its plans

significantly. Knowing this, the command had already started

forming a concept of operations to fit a less urgent environment

in connection with Cuba, the rest of Latin America and, to a

certain degree, other portions of the world.

Plans Started In November. (S) By the end of the first

month of crisis, the command started considering what the last-

ing effects of the establishment of Cudjoe Key operations would

be. Two areas had to be explored: (a) the which had

been received to cope with the situation, and (b) what long-term

operations could be expected

assuming Cuba would remain Communist-domi-

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The need for long-term operations hardly required confir-

mation. By the middle of December, there was increasing evi-

dence that the Soviets -- in a strictly physical sense -- were

(2) All reports, from operating commands to the

indicated that the command was at Key

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there to stay. On 16 December, Mark S. Watson, military correspondent for the Baltimore Sun, reported that there were four separate task forces of "... well-trained, well disciplined, well-entrenched professional soldiers," in Cuba. He said the force included tank, anti-tank elements, and highly mobile light and medium artillery to supplement the infantry; probably something over 6000 in these impressive task groups. As added food for thought, he said:

They now serve to protect the "non-offensive" Russian installations and equipment which are undeniably in Cuba and such other weapons and equipment as are believed to be there. The latter are well-concealed from aerial cameras, by camouflaging of an extraordinarily skillful type, and thus discernible only by the on-site scrutiny which Russia's Premier, Khrushchev, promised but which Cuba refused to permit.

Whether the Russian protection of their installations proves to be from "invaders" or from Cubans themselves in some unpredictable contingency is another matter. The protection is there, and being there, serves also as a visible token of Moscow's continuing support of the regime of Cuba's Premier, Fidel Castro.

(S) Aside from this, however, the command, considering the more immediate aspects of the picture, felt that "... a basic assumption must be made that reconnaissance operations will be greatly reduced." ⁶⁰¹³ This had already taken

place by the middle of December. So, in the meantime, the command took steps to change its operations plans for 1963.

* The FBI has made a permanent record of this document
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The significant change was in concept rather than size, as plans changed from ERU operation to operation of permanent sites.

Mostly, the command had to anticipate operational costs and, on a long-term basis, Cudjoe Key (and the accompanying quarters arrangement at Marathon, Fla.) was far too expensive for a permanent thing. Consequently, the need was for

fast and easy facilities to be moved to a military installation

where possible. Actually, this included the majority of the

assigned (or anticipated) positions of service. They now serve in Cuba and equipment which are not easily moved and such other weapons and equipment as are believed to be there. The latter are well-concealed from aerial cameras and this could theoretically be moved. The command felt that the positions at Cudjoe Key could be

limited to

Whether the Russian protection of their installations proves to be from "invaders" or from Cubans themselves in some unpredictable contingency is another matter. The latter four would be untoken of Moscow's continuing support of the regime of Cuba's manned except during tension or practice alert. This would

Aside from this, however, the command, consider-

... moved to the Mainland. MacDill AFB was considered the most

favorable location at the time, and no tests were started

on 3 December 1961. Operations will be greatly reduced."

Summary of USAFSS Cuban Crisis Operations

It is difficult to briefly summarize the operations

* The ERU was made a permanent facility (6947th Security Squadron) effective 1 Feb 63.

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of USAFSS during the Cuban crisis -- both with airborne and ground

-- because of the many off-shoot actions and results of these actions. One fact remained as constant all the

way through both phases of the operations, which covered more than six months in the course of this study. The concept of

USAFSS emergency reaction operations was sound -- this was

borne out by the speed with which the implements of the mission

were dispatched and established as operational. On the other

hand, the manning of the command, particularly from a

point of view, needed overhauling, if all possible emergencies were to be met in the future.

(TS) This, of course, was going to be an herculean undertaking from both a planning and implementation standpoint.

The basic difficulty was, quite naturally, money. To train

and analysts (to say nothing of special communications personnel) was both expensive and time consuming. A rule of thumb was three years for the development of a man into a new

. This included a great deal of formal education.

(TS) From a look at the entire picture -- both and ground -- there was increasing proof that, regardless of expense, was the answer to many problems; e.g., speed and flexibility, and the capability of consistent . All of these

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things considered, there was much work in the future in the Western Hemisphere. The command knew pretty well what it needed as far as existing (or procurable) facilities were concerned. Whether or not it would get what it needed remained to be seen.

On the other hand, the planning of the command, particularly from a point of view, needed overhauling, if all possible errors

were to be met in the future.

(2) This, of course, was going to be an herculean

undertaking from both a planning and implementation standpoint.

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and analysts (to say nothing of special communications

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and ground -- there was increasing proof that re-

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problems; e.g., speed and flexibility, and the capability of con-

All of these

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NOTES

and

1. Memo, Col. Macia to Gen. Klocko, Actions Taken In Response to Declaration of DEFCON III By JCS, undated.

2. Msg, ADP 171, to USAFSS, 20 Oct 62.

3. Msg, Shepard to Macia, (no cite no.) 21 Oct 62.

4. The San Antonio Express-News, Sect A, pp 1, 10, 23 Nov 62.

5. Memo for Record, Col. Macia, Cuban Plan, 22 Oct 62.

6. Ltr, AFSCC to USAFSS, Movement of BIRETTA Personnel, (Undated).

7. Ltr, AFSCC to USAFSS, Proj. BIRETTA, 22 Oct 62.

8. Ltr, AFSCC to OIC ERU, Initial Inst to OIC AFSCC ERU, 22 Oct 62.

9. Interview by the author with Mr. Joseph C. Hinchcliff, SCO, 2 Dec 62.

10. Memo, Col. Macia to Gen. Klocko, undated, hereinafter referred to as "Macia-Klocko Memo".

11. Msg, NAVSECGRU to USAFSS, DTG 22/2042Z Oct 62.

12. Msg, to USAFSS, DTG 28/0908Z Oct 62.

13. Msg, to USAFSS, DTG 22/2042 Oct 62.

14. Msg, to AFSCC, No cite no., 3 Nov 62.

15. Macia-Klocko Memo.

16. Radnote, Col. Shepard to Col. Macia, 22 Oct 62.

17. Msg, AFSS/ USAFSS, AFSS/FM 24-10-01, 24 Oct 62.

18. Time Magazine, 2 Nov 62, P. 29.

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